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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [UNSC](#) [IAEA](#) [GG](#) [IR](#) [TU](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIAN POSITION ON IRAN REMAINS THE SAME

REF: A. UNVIENNA 511
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 2521

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Russia will not allow tension over Georgia to diminish unity among the P5 1, although the GOR is not ready to support a new UNSC resolution and prefers continued negotiations with Iran, according to the MFA. While Tehran hopes the current international situation will lead Moscow to significantly enhance bilateral ties, the GOR has no plans to do so and will not change its policy against selling weapons that could destabilize the Middle East. The MFA and analysts criticized calls for Russia to respond to supposed U.S. and NATO plans to expand into the Caucasus by increasing military cooperation with Iran, telling us that the principal Russian proponent of this argument was employed by Tehran. Iranian FM Mottaki's September 12 visit to Moscow allowed him to further explain Iran's position on Georgia, as well as a chance to discuss a planned Caspian Sea summit. The MFA saw his trip, followed by visits to Baku and Tbilisi, as evidence of Iran's desire to play a larger diplomatic role in the region and counter Turkey's increasing influence. End summary.

Russia Will Not Break P5 1 Unity

[1](#)2. (C) MFA Counselor for Iran Vladimir Levykin told us on September 18 that Russia's position on the Iranian nuclear program had not changed and that tensions over Georgia would not break P5 1 unity. This did not mean that Russia was ready to support a new UNSC resolution, as the GOR wanted to "prevent a larger quarrel" between the West and Iran and preferred negotiations to punitive measures to induce Tehran to comply with existing UNSC and IAEA resolutions, a message DFM Ryabkov would deliver during the September 19 P5 1 PolDir's meeting. Levykin provided an assessment of the IAEA Director General's most recent report that was similar to that of the Russian Ambassador to the IAEA, telling us that El-Baradi was not entirely critical of Iran (ref A). Tehran saw itself as "genuinely cooperating" with the IAEA and "hoped" for some positive signal from the international community during this next round of UNSC and IAEA deliberations.

Iran Hopes to Capitalize On International Tension

[1](#)3. (C) Levykin agreed that Iran wanted to capitalize upon international tension resulting from the Georgian crisis, which Tehran hoped would negatively impact the P5 1 and lead Moscow to step-up bilateral relations. The Iranians were not approaching this task as overtly, or clumsily, as Syrian President Assad did when he offered his country as a Russian military base and asked for advanced weaponry (ref B). Assad "wants to be a regional king, while Iran already is," said Levykin, who thought Tehran appeared more politically astute and hoped for subtle changes in bilateral relations.

14. (C) Levykin stressed that the Georgian crisis would not lead Russia alter the basics of its relationship with Iran, nor would the GOR reassess its policy against providing weapons that would destabilize the Middle East, noting that FM Lavrov had said this publicly on several recent occasions. Levykin could not comment on the September 17 statement by Rosoboronexport chief Anatoliy Isaykin, who said that Russia and Iran would continue discussions regarding arms sales and noted that there was no ban on supplying Iran with defensive systems, including anti-aircraft missiles.

Russia Has No Plans to Form Alliance With Iran

15. (C) Levykin rejected calls for Moscow to counter U.S. "hostility" toward Russia by creating an alliance with Iran, and questioned the credentials of the principal proponent of this idea, Radzhab Safarov, Director of the Russian Center for Iranian Studies. An opinion piece by the analyst appearing in Vremya Novosti, which was subsequently picked up by the Iranian press, argued that Russia should establish military bases in Iran to counter U.S. and NATO plans to expand into the Caucasus, provide Iran with sophisticated surface-to-air missiles, expand civilian nuclear cooperation, and accelerate Iran's entry into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

16. (C) Analysts we spoke with criticized Safarov as a "radical" who receives funding and instructions from Tehran, which he visits frequently. Vladimir Evseev of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and Vladimir Sazhin of the Institute of Oriental Studies, told us separately that they were worried

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by increasing support for Safarov's argument within the analytical community. While this view was not shared by the majority of experts, Evseev lamented that so long as U.S.-Russia relations remained strained by Georgia, NATO expansion, and missile defense, the "number of analysts supporting Safarov's point of view will be preserved and maybe increase in the near future."

Iranian Diplomacy a Sign of Tehran's Aspirations

17. (C) Levykin explained that FM Mottaki came to Moscow on September 12 to discuss the situation in Georgia and the Caspian Sea summit planned for Baku later this year. Mottaki criticized Saakashvilli for his provocative actions and supported Russia's response. The GOR understood, however, that Tehran would not recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia due to its concern with separatist sentiment in Iran's Azeri and Kurdish areas and in Baluchistan.

18. (C) Levykin thought that Mottaki's travel to Moscow, Baku and Tbilisi was evidence of Iran's desire to play a larger role in regional affairs, although he was unsure of what the FM hoped to achieve in Tbilisi considering that Iran-Georgia relations have traditionally been "cool." Levykin added that the Iranians had taken note of the increasing diplomatic activism displayed by Turkey, its traditional rival in the region. While Tehran would prefer not to see Ankara succeed in establishing its proposed Caucasus' stability platform, the Iranians would seek to be a member of the organization rather than be shut out of it.

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